

Cooperation with Other Utilities Strengthens VEC

The 72nd Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association (TECA) in November was an opportunity for representatives of 24 Tennessee electricity distribution utilities to gather together, discuss issues of mutual concern, and search for ways to better serve the 1.1 million electricity consumers we serve.

At this meeting I was honored to be elected vice president of the TECA's board of trustees. This year I am also serving as secretary-treasurer of the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association (TVPPA). The TVPPA is an organization representing 155 electricity distribution systems that purchase power from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Participation in these organizations is stipulated in the sixth of the Seven Cooperative Principles which states: "Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures."

But do these organizations really make a difference for VEC member-owners? They sure do.

One of the most important benefits of joining together with other utilities we are able to provide better service at lower costs. When we connect with other utilities to purchase equipment and supplies, we enjoy bigger volume discounts. Through TVPPA we can also provide our employees with a higher level of training at a more affordable cost by combining with other utilities.

Joining with other cooperatives through TECA makes it possible for us to economically offer youth and young adult leadership development programs.

Both of these organizations also help us at VEC be more effective advocates for our members.

When legislation is introduced in Nashville that could have an impact on VEC member-owners, we are able to unite with other Tennessee cooperatives through TECA to speak with a cohesive and powerful voice to protect the interests of our customers and keep electric bills as low as possible.

The value of informal association is also important. Our employees often get to interact with folks who perform similar jobs at other utilities and they can learn best practices and be prepared for potential pitfalls.

Whether it's purchasing equipment and supplies, offering programs, training, or speaking out for our members, VEC can do it more effectively and more economically by joining with other utilities.



Rody Blevins
President/CEO
Volunteer Energy
Cooperative

VEC Offers College Scholarships

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) wants to reward students who have used their time and talents to benefit their local communities. VEC's Lillard-Shadow scholarship program rewards academic and community service achievements by awarding four \$2,000 scholarships to students who will graduate from high schools in VEC's service area in the spring of 2014.

The scholarships honor J.W. Lillard and Willis A Shadow, two community leaders who spearheaded efforts to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming the organization that would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

Mr. Shadow and Mr. Lillard were instrumental in improving the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents through electric power.

Four awards of \$500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to spring 2014

high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC electric customers.

Applications will be judged by an independent panel based on each student's community service activities and citizenship - 40%; written communication skills - 20%; financial need - 25%; and academic achievement - 15%.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

All application materials must be completed and delivered to VEC's Corporate Office in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 7, 2014.

VEC Contract Crews Inspecting Poles

Crews from Southeast Woodland are conducting power pole inspections for Volunteer Energy Cooperative. The crews, which typically consist of four to five members in pick-up trucks and sometimes on ATV four wheelers, carry VEC Contractor identification. Pick-up trucks also display VEC contractor identification.

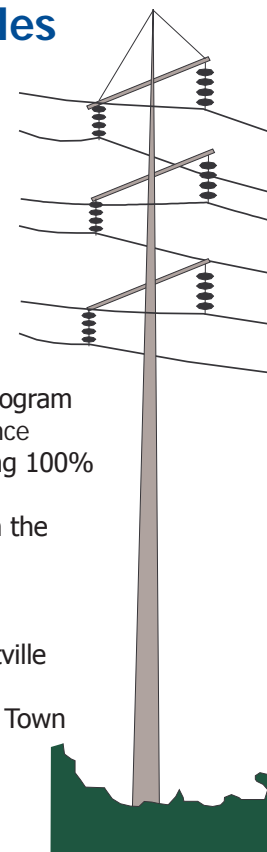
These inspections allow VEC to identify poles that may need replacement and to identify problems before they result in power outages.

Nine years ago VEC began an aggressive pole inspection program in an effort to spot deteriorating poles and older equipment. Since beginning this project VEC is working toward a goal of inspecting 100% of the poles every 15 years.

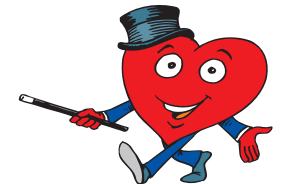
Inspections began in December and are being conducted in the following order:

- Bradley County: Sugar Grove 344 - Ladd Springs
- Hamilton County: Harrison Bay 254 - 58 North
- McMinn County: Sanford 324 - Co Rd 50, Hillsview, Lamontville
- Cumberland County: Fairfield 324 - Lakeview Dr
- Putnam County: Monterey 224 - Hanging Limb, Portions of Town
- Fentress County: Jamestown 354 - Hwy 52 West

It is not necessary for customers to be home during the inspections and power will not be affected.



Plant Manager Offers Students Lessons in Real-Life



Carol Howard's roots are firmly planted in Meigs County, so when the lifelong Decatur resident became plant manager at Storm Copper she really wanted to hire local residents for the good-paying, mid-level jobs at the manufacturing facility.

Howard said that only about 26% of Storm employees are from Meigs County. She said she'd like for that figure to be closer to 75%.

"I'm looking for employees who live here and want to stay here," Howard said. "But we were having a hard time finding high school graduates with the skills we are looking for."

This fall Howard took the bull by the horns and, with the cooperation of school administrators, she began teaching two classes at Meigs County High School.

She focuses on specific math skills that are useful in manufacturing, basic job skills, and more specialized manufacturing skills like reading blueprints and using instruments such as calipers, angle gauges, and radius gauges.

"Storm Copper needs employees with these skills, but these skills are useful in virtually all manufacturing plants," Howard said.

Howard is a good resource for students who are looking to land manufacturing jobs when they graduate. She serves on advisory boards for the University of Tennessee's Center for Industrial Services, the Chattanooga Regional Manufacturers' Association, and the Tennessee Tech Masters Engineering Program.

She knows what employers are looking for.

"In our class the students learn to read plans and designs, but they also learn about opportunities and how to prepare for opportunities," she said. "We also talk about real-world issues like the cost of living."

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Project Deserve Donation -

Members of the Plateau Corvette Club, Sam Goldkopf, Russ Schubert, and Michael Ingrassia present a check to VEC's Crossville Service Area Manager Bobby Randolph for Project Deserve.



This is the second year the club has made a holiday donation to the VEC program that assists the needy with their electric bills.



Storm Copper Plant Manager Carol Howard is hoping to prepare local high school students for good-paying, mid-level manufacturing jobs.

VECcustomers Share Your Change Changes Things



The VECcustomers Share program funded \$29,800 in community service grants in September. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$4.7 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last day of each month. For additional information, contact the office of Marketing and Economic Development, at 423-334-7051. Applications are also available online, at www.vec.org.



VECcustomers Share Board Member Erbin Baumgardener, center, presents a grant check to Beth Sizemore, Mary Lambertson, Jane Phillips, Gene Sizemore and Joe Bell of the Starr Mountain Quilts of Valor Quilters.

Organizations receiving grants in November

Fentress County Literacy Council	\$2,500	Monterey FBC Youth Group	\$500
Kiwanis Club of Spring City	\$2,000	Cherokee Removal Park-Blythe Ferry	\$500
Ooltewah High School Band Boosters	\$1,500	CATCH Ministry, Cleveland	\$500
People Helping People, Benton	\$1,250	Midway High School PTO	\$500
Grace and Mercy Ministries, Athens	\$1,200	Pickett County High School Basketball Booster Club	\$500
Starr Mountain Quilts of Valor Quilters, Englewood	\$1,050	Bradley/Polk Foster Adoptive Care Association	\$500
Luminary Health Fair Committee, Ten Mile	\$1,000	Stone Memorial High School DECA Club	\$500
Bread of Life Rescue Mission, Crossville	\$1,000	Meigs County Senior Center	\$500
Benton Food Fund Booster Club	\$1,000	South Roane County Volunteer Fire Department	\$500
Visually Impaired Support Group of Cumberland County	\$1,000	Boy Scout Troop 403, Decatur	\$500
Christmas on the Mountain, Crossville	\$1,000	AMVETS Post 90, Decatur	\$500
BLG Foundation for the benefit of Creating Christmas Memories, Cleveland	\$1,000	Hull-York Memorial Chapter 5 DAV, Byrdstown	\$500
Rhea County Adult Literacy Council	\$800	Bradley Central High School Cross Country Boosters Club	\$500
Midway Middle School Softball Boosters	\$750	Toys for Children, Monterey	\$500
Central High School Baseball Boosters	\$750	South Cumberland Elementary School Garden Club	\$500
Pickett County Kindergarten Enrichment Club	\$750	Polk County High School Baseball Boosters	\$500
Mineral Springs Hunger Relief Ministry	\$750	CASA of Cumberland County	\$489
Spring City Historical Museum & Depot Foundation	\$700	Pickett County High School Student Health Council	\$400
Byrdstown Headstart	\$600	Homework Hotline	\$250
Cumberland County High School Cheer Boosters	\$511	Rogers Creek Youth Basketball	\$250
Monterey Upwards Sports	\$500	Meigs Historical Society	\$200

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Howard also enlists other Storm employees to help with classes. Recently Matt Sneed, a process engineer at Storm and a Meigs County High School graduate himself, and Brian Ziegler, a design engineer at Storm, taught students the basics of electrical grounding principals for industrial applications.

The principals are universal to manufacturing but also especially important at Storm where they fabricate a variety of copper grounding components.

Aaron Pride, a Meigs County High School senior, said the small class size and the unique focus of the class is what he enjoys.

"I've learned to read blueprints and work within tolerances," Pride said. "In larger classes the teachers can't always work with you one-on-one as much as they can in here. This is really practical and real-life stuff – and it's very hands-on."

Beginning with the spring semester Howard is planning to offer a co-op opportunity for seniors which will move the classroom directly to the Storm facilities.

"There are some logistics to work out, but that is the plan," Howard said.

Whether it's in the classroom or at the Storm facility, Meigs County High School students will be getting practical and hands-on experience that will help prepare them for real-life opportunities that are available in their hometowns.



Brian Ziegler, a design engineer with Storm Copper, shows students a typical residential electrical grounding design.



Matt Sneed, a process engineer at Storm Copper, reviews some basic electrical grounding components and designs with Meigs County High School students.

Don't Let Your Fireplace Burn Your Budget



Your fireplace may be great to warm up by on a cold winter night, but be careful that it doesn't burn a hole in your wallet. Whether you use it or not, your fireplace can be a pipeline of energy waste.

When in use, your fireplace may actually have a reverse effect on your home heating. Older fireplaces are generally quite inefficient and only heat the immediate area. The convection of the fire can also suck conditioned air out of the rest of your home and cause your furnace to work harder.

When a fire is not burning there is usually only a thin metal damper to keep warm air from flowing out the chimney. The damper is 100-year-old technology and does little to insulate your home.

Fortunately there are steps you can take to keep from getting burned by your fireplace:

- **Install a top-sealing damper.** These dampers are installed on the top of your chimney and act as a storm door, keeping conditioned air in regardless of the season.
- **If your fireplace is never used, consider sealing it** with insulation or an insulating inflatable damper. Be sure to remove all insulation if you plan on using the fireplace again.
- **Consider installing a fireplace heater.** These units draw fresh air from the room, circulate it through a heating chamber and blow it back into the room. They are a sealed system, so no smoke ever enters the room. Fireplace heaters will dramatically increase the efficiency of your fireplace.
- **Install glass fireplace doors.** This improvement will help the efficiency, safety and aesthetics of your fireplace. Glass doors allow for better sealing of the fireplace so less air is lost to convection and to simple drafts. The doors will also protect children from flames, and can prevent embers from escaping into the room. Consider installing doors in conjunction with a fireplace heater for maximum efficiency.

There are a wide variety of products on the market to help improve the efficiency of your fireplace or simply seal off an unused chimney. Shop around or ask an expert to determine what is best to keep your energy dollars from going up in smoke.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment
Effective January 1, 2014

2.305¢

For the most current FCA information, visit www.vec.org

